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## COLONIAL COMMERCE<sup>1</sup>

As a rule trade and commerce in their various manifestations, as features of American colonial history, have been considered of minor importance by our historians and relegated to the obscurity of a few supplemental paragraphs. No writer has placed them in the same rank with government, administration, and social development, or has deemed their consideration essential to a proper understanding of the conditions under which our colonies were founded and grew up. Yet it is a well-recognized fact that during the greater part of our colonial period commerce and the colonies were correlative terms, unthinkable each without the other. As an underlying factor in colonial life commerce was of greater significance than it is to-day in the life of the United States, for some of the most vital aspects of our early history can be understood only when construed in terms of commercial relationship, either with England or with some of the other maritime powers of the period which were finding their strength and prosperity in colonial and commercial expansion.

In the domain of history a shift in the angle of observation will often bring into view new and important vistas and will create such new impressions of old scenes as to alter our ideas of the whole landscape. In the case of colonial history this statement is peculiarly true. Viewing the colonies as isolated units of government and life, detached in the main from the larger world of England and the Continent, leads us to ignore those connections that constituted the colonial relationship in which commerce played a most important rôle. The older view is natural because it is easily taken and satisfies local interest and pride; the newer point of observation is more remote, less obvious, and more difficult of attainment. Yet it is the only view that enables us to preserve the integrity of our subject and so to comprehend the meaning of our history. The thirteen colonies were not isolated units; they were dependencies of the British crown and parts of a colonial empire extending from America to India. They were not a detached group of communities; on the contrary they were a group among other groups of settlements and plantations belonging colonially to five of the European nations, Portugal, Spain, Holland, France, and England, and their history was influenced at

<sup>1</sup> A paper read in the conference on colonial commerce at the meeting of the American Historical Association in Charleston, December 30, 1913.

every point by the policies and rivalries of these maritime powers. The age in which they reached their maximum of strength as colonies was one in which the colonial relationship was highly developed and the feature of subordination to a higher authority an integral and dominant characteristic. Such an interpretation of colonial history is not a scholar's vagary, a matter of theory and hypothesis to be accepted or rejected as the writer on colonial history may please. It is historically sound, preserving the proper perspective, and preventing in no way the following out to the uttermost detail the local activities and interests of the colonists themselves.

The reason why this colonial relationship has been so persistently ignored in the past is not difficult to discover. The period of our history before 1783 has been construed as merely the ante-chamber to the great hall of our national development. In so doing writers have concerned themselves not with colonial history as such, but rather with the colonial antecedents of our national history. This form of treatment is common to all our histories, even the very best, because all limit their scope to the thirteen colonies, which formed but part of the colonial area and are segregated for no other reason than that they constituted the portion out of which the United States of America grew. In our text-books, not excepting the very latest, the colonial period is frankly presented as an era of beginnings, and stress is laid upon ideas and institutions that were destined to become dominant features of the nation's later career. With this mode of presenting the subject we may not quarrel, but it seems almost a pity, now that we are becoming such a nation of text-book writers, that the children of the country cannot be set upon the right way of understanding what the colonial period really means. Dealing with thirteen colonies, searching among them for the conditions under which were laid the foundations of the great republic, and treating those conditions as but preliminary to the history of the United States will never enable the writer to present an honest or complete picture of colonial life or to analyze successfully the causes that provoked revolution or rendered independence inevitable.

In one respect the colonial period is fundamentally different from that of our national history. For one hundred and seventy-five years, the people who inhabited the American seaboard were not members of an independent and sovereign state, free of all control except such as they exercised for themselves. Legally, they formed dependent and subordinate communities, subject to a will and authority higher than themselves and outside of themselves. This state of dependency was a reality and not a pretense. At least, the members

of the British Parliament deemed it so, when in 1733 they rejected a petition from the assembly of Massachusetts as "frivolous and groundless, an high insult upon his Majesty's government, and tending to shake off the dependency of the said colony upon this kingdom, to which by law and right they are and ought to be subject". At least the British executive and administrative authorities deemed it so, when by a thousand acts and through hundreds of officials in the colonies they endeavored to maintain the royal prerogative and to carry out the British policy of making English subjects the sole carriers of the whole British commerce and of appropriating and securing to England and her subjects "all the emoluments arising from the trade of her own colonies". The British merchants took this view, when they could say, as Stephen Godin asserted in 1724, that "it were better to have no colonies at all unless they be subservient to their mother country". Certainly the colonists deemed it so, when by their very restlessness under restraint they betrayed the reality of the ties that bound them. No act of the colonists, either individual or collective, can be traced to a conscious expectation of future citizenship in an independent republic. No aspect of colonial resistance to the royal authority was ever due to any definite belief that an independent nation was in the making. There is nothing to show that a colonist ever allowed visions of such a future to influence the course of his daily life. To the colonist there was no United States of America in anticipation, and there should be none to the student of colonial history to-day. The subject should be dealt with for its own sake and not for its manifestations of self-government and democracy; and the eye of the scholar should look no further ahead than to its legitimate end, the close of a period the era of revolution, war, and independence.

It may be stated as a general principle that studying a period of history with its later manifestations before us is apt to lead to perversions of historical truth. With notions of the present in mind we approach certain landmarks of our early history in much the same spirit as that in which older writers approached Magna Carta. Most of us make too few allowances for the differences of mental longitude between the present and the past, and fail to realize that our thoughts were not the thoughts of our forefathers and our institutions were not the institutions they set up. The colonial period is our Middle Ages, and he would be rash who interpreted the thoughts of that time in the light of later views as to what democracy ought to be. There are traces and important traces of radical notions in matters of government in our colonial period, for our colonies were settled during a century of unrest in religion and politics; but these notions were not

the characteristic or the generally prevalent ideas that governed colonial action. It is not profitable or scholarly to single out these manifestations, to study them apart from their surroundings, and to classify them as representative and typical of the period in which they appeared. I am afraid that the majority of the colonists listening to some modern comments upon the early institutions of New England and Virginia, would have replied in somewhat the same fashion as Maitland pictures William Lyndwood replying to questions on the "canon law of Rome":

I do not quite understand what you mean by popular liberties and this thing that you call democracy. I am an Englishman and I know the liberties that I enjoyed in England. But these were class liberties, to be understood in the light of the law and of the rights of the crown and parliament; they are not what you mean when you talk about popular rights and liberties in a democratic republic. You mean equal liberties for all, including the mass of the people. But that is something we do not want, for that would admit all men of whatever station, property, or faith to equal privileges in society, church, and state, and such a philosophy of government is one in which only a dreamer would believe.

In truth, we have arrived at this idea of what our forefathers thought, by selecting certain documents and incidents, from the Mayflower Compact to the Declaration of Independence, and from Bacon's Rebellion to the various riotous acts of the pre-Revolutionary period; and, construing them more or less according to our wishes and prepossessions, have wrought therefrom an epic of patriotism satisfying to our self-esteem. We love to praise those who struggled, sometimes with high purposes, sometimes under the influence of purely selfish motives, against the authority of the British crown. But this, in an historical sense, is pure pragmatism. It is not history, because it treats only a part of the subject and treats it wrongly and with a manifest bias. It does not deal with what may be called the normal conditions of the colonial period. It ignores the prevailing sentiment of those who, however often they may have objected to the way in which the royal authority was exercised and to the men who exercised it, lived contented lives, satisfied in the main with the conditions surrounding them, and believing firmly in the system of government under which they had been born and brought up. It misunderstands and consequently exaggerates expressions of radical sentiment, and interprets such terms as "freedom", "liberty", and "independence" as if, in the mouths of those who used them, they had but a single meaning and that meaning the one commonly prevalent at the present time. It relegates to a place of secondary importance the royal prerogative and the relation with England,

which beyond all other factors dominated the lives and actions of a majority of the colonists. Without an understanding of the relationship with England, colonial history can have no meaning. Before we can treat of colonial self-government, of the growth of democratic ideas, of the conflict between the colonies and the mother-country, and of the westward movement, we must know what England was doing, according to what principles she acted, and how these principles found application in the colonial world that stretched from Hudson Bay to Barbadoes. Only in this way can we deal with our own colonial problems, and only in this way can we answer those subordinate but important questions, why did not the West Indies and the Floridas revolt, and why did the Canadian colonies remain loyal to the mother-country.

This preliminary statement is necessary in order to explain the attitude that I shall take in regard to the subject under consideration here. One period of our history, that from 1690 to 1750, has long been recognized as a neglected period, and it will continue to be neglected as long as we treat colonial history merely as a time of incubation. Now just as an important period has suffered neglect from failure to make a radical change in our point of view, so an important phase of colonial history has suffered similar neglect from a similar cause. I refer to the subject of colonial commerce. The many divisions of this fundamentally important topic have lain hitherto strewn about over the pages of colonial history, veritable *disiecta membra*, without proper unity and co-ordination, and without that grouping of principal, subordinate, incidental, and extraordinary features, which taken together disclose the paramount significance of the whole.

Any study of colonial commerce should begin with a thorough grounding in the commercial policy of England from the beginning of the colonial period, and a thorough understanding of the place of the colonies, not only in England's commercial scheme, but also in the schemes of other maritime states of the European world. England's relations with the colonies were primarily commercial in character, not only because of the wide expanse of water that separated the mother-country from her outlying possessions, but much more because from the beginning to the end of the legal connection, England's interest in the colonies was a commercial interest. British merchants and statesmen valued the colonies just as far as they contributed to the commercial and industrial prosperity at home; and they actively promoted and upheld legislation that brought the colonies within the bonds of the commercial empire. Commerce was, therefore, the cornerstone of the British system. Naturally other

interests, legal, political, institutional, religious, and military, assumed large proportions as the British colonial system was gradually worked out: but in the ultimate analysis it will be found that the building up of strong, self-governing communities in America and the West Indies was a contributory rather than a primary object, furthering the commercial aims of British merchants and statesmen through the establishment of vigorous but dependent groups of producers and consumers; for England was bound to protect and develop the sources of her wealth and power. England valued her colonies exactly as far as they were of commercial importance to her, and it was no accident that the terms "trade" and "plantations" were joined in the same phrase as the title of the British boards of control, or that in the same title "trade" took precedence over "plantations". The commercial history of every colony, without exception though not all in the same measure, was affected by this policy of the mother-country, who, possessing plenary authority, was able to enforce to no inconsiderable extent the policy that she laid down. A study of colonial commerce carries us at once, therefore, into the very heart of that most fundamental of all colonial questions, the relation of the colonies to the sovereign power across the sea.

If we limit our observation to a single colony or to the group of thirteen colonies, as we are more or less bound to do when dealing with colonial history as prefatory to that of the United States, we get an imperfect view of our subject, if, indeed, that can be called a view at all which is taken at such close range. Commerce thus seen appears to be an interesting, but not particularly conspicuous, feature of colonial life. Settlement, government, politics, religion, war, and social life generally have taken precedence of it in the narratives of our writers. If not ignored or treated as an issue of only local or minor consequence, it is used as a convenient text for moralizing on the unwarranted part which a government can take in interfering with the free and natural development of a high-spirited and liberty-loving people. As a rule such an attitude is due to the unprofitable habit of studying colonial history with our ideas warped and distorted by standards of judgment derived from the Revolutionary and national periods, a habit that is formed when colonial history is studied from the wrong end. Mr. Beer is showing us how to correct that habit, and his volumes are teaching us what can be done when the right vantage-point is sought for and attained. We are now beginning to learn that what we call colonial commerce was but part of that ocean-wide commercial activity of England and her merchants which stands as England's most vital possession of the

last two centuries, and thus was concerned with a larger world of obligations and opportunities than that embraced by the thirteen colonies. Construed in this way, colonial commerce grows in dignity and rank and yields to no other phase of our history in the influence it has exercised upon the life of the period to which it belongs.

In presenting our subject from this standpoint, we must in the first place acquire a sound knowledge of the commercial ideas of the period, of mercantilism and the self-sufficing empire in all aspects of their development, and we must exhibit a sympathetic attitude toward views and opinions that had as legitimate a right to a place in the commercial and political thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as have corresponding but different views and opinions a right to exist to-day. We must study understandingly the conditions under which these commercial ideas came into being, and must analyze thoroughly and carefully all orders, proclamations, statutes, and instructions that represent official utterances upon these points; the minutes of subordinate councils and boards; and the letters, pamphlets, and memorials of private persons that contain expressions of individual opinion. Furthermore, we must follow in all their ramifications, in all the colonies dependent on the authority of the British crown, the attempts, whether successful or unsuccessful, to apply these regulations to the actual business of commerce. The Navigation Acts were but the most conspicuous of hundreds of official declarations, defining the limits within which colonial commerce could be carried on; yet even now we understand but imperfectly the influence of those acts upon our colonial history and the extent to which they were obeyed.

In tracing the effect of the Acts of Trade and Navigation, we shall meet with a series of institutions in the colonies that played a continuous and active part in the every-day life of the colonists, and we shall find that as yet scarcely one of these institutions has been made the subject of any comprehensive treatment. The Navigation Acts gave rise to the plantation duty, the collectors and surveyors of customs, and the naval officers, and involved the intricate question of salaries and fees; they brought into existence the courts of vice-admiralty with their complements of officials, their procedure under the civil law, their claims of jurisdiction, and their time-honored antagonism to the courts of common law which had already and everywhere been set up in America. We shall find that the machinery for the control of colonial commerce, thus set in motion, gave added duties, not only to existing departments and boards in England—a subject of no little importance in itself for colonial history—but also to the governors of every colony without exception,



and to the admirals and commanders of ships of war engaged before 1713 (and even after that date on account of West African pirates and Spanish *guardacostas*, in the work of convoying fleets of merchant ships back and forth across the Atlantic); of looking after affairs in Newfoundland, where civil control was vested in an admiral-governor; and of interfering, long before the famous interferences of 1760 to 1765, to prevent illegal trade and the traffic in uncustomed goods. As we follow on in our study of colonial commerce, we meet with the attempts to set up ports of entry in Virginia, Maryland, and elsewhere for the discharge and lading of ships and the checking of illegal trade; and with the complicated problems of embargoes, chiefly in times of war, of the impressment of seamen from colonial vessels in England and from colonial ports in America for the manning of the royal ships; and of the issue of passes, provided by the Admiralty under special treaties between England and the Barbary States, great numbers of which were used in America by American-built ships to guard against capture by the Barbary cruisers, most dangerous of whom were the Algerine pirates. We are concerned with the question of privateering and the issue of letters of marque, and also with that of prizes, the establishment of special prize courts, and the disposition of ships captured in war. We are concerned also with the question of coast defense in America, the employment of frigates and smaller vessels for the guarding of individual colonies, and with the whole subject of piracy, including the efforts made through the navy, the colonial governors, and specially commissioned courts erected for the purpose, to suppress these marauders of the seas. Indirectly, we are concerned with England's attempt to persuade the colonies to produce naval stores for the use of the royal navy, an attempt which played an important part in the industrial history of the continental colonies, especially in New England; and we are also concerned with England's determination to control the supply of masts from the northern American forests, by means of special officials, notably the surveyor-general of the woods and his deputies, whose business was very obnoxious to the northern colonists.

Furthermore, the attempts of the colonists to evade the restrictions that England laid down for the control of navigation and commerce not only resulted in the seizure of scores of ships, their condemnation and sale, and the arousing of a great amount of ill-will and hostility, but they were also responsible, and often directly responsible, for events of political and constitutional importance, such as the loss of the Massachusetts charter, the consolidation of the northern colonies under Andros, the temporary control of Mary-

land and Pennsylvania by the king, and the unsuccessful efforts, lasting nearly half a century, to unite the proprietary and corporate colonies to the crown. These are important events in colonial history and can all be traced immediately or remotely to the demands of England's commercial policy.

Continuing this subject in its further ramifications, we find it leading us on into other aspects of the life of the colonies. Commerce influenced the passing of colonial laws; provoked the king in council to disallow colonial acts, because under the statute of 1696 the colonists were forbidden to have any "Laws, Bye-Laws, Usages or Customs" that were in any way repugnant to the terms of the act, and because the colonial governors were forbidden "to pass any laws by which the Trade or Navigation of the kingdom [might] in any ways be affected";<sup>2</sup> brought about appeals to the High Court of Admiralty from the courts of vice-admiralty in America, and in a few cases at least from the common law courts in the colonies to the

<sup>2</sup> *House of Lords Manuscripts*, new series, II. 483-488, 494-499 (1696-1697); C. O. 5: 1364, pp. 474-476; *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial*, vol. II., § 1271 (1717); C. O. 324: 10, pp. 443-454, 456-497 (1722); *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial*, vol. III., § 58 (1724); C. O. 5: 1296, pp. 120-130; *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial*, IV. 763-764 (1766).

Dr. O. M. Dickerson, in commenting on this paper at the Charleston meeting, expressed his belief that seventy-five per cent. of the "vetoes" of colonial laws must be explained on other than commercial grounds. Until the royal disallowances have been collected and their contents analyzed, we are hardly in a position to speak very positively about their numerical proportions, but after studying with considerable care those in print and in manuscript relating to all the colonies for the entire colonial period, I am convinced that Dr. Dickerson's percentage is too high. Dr. Dickerson must have failed to realize that scores of disallowances apparently concerned with other than commercial matters are found on closer inspection to have a trade motive somewhere lurking in them. This is particularly true of all that deal with financial legislation. But after all can we determine the place of trade and commerce in colonial history by simply counting the number of laws passed and disallowed that deal with this subject? I think not. The colonists had frequent warnings that legislation affecting trade or discriminating in any way against British merchants or British commodities would not be tolerated, and the governors were expressly instructed to veto such laws. It would be surprising, therefore, if any large number of such laws had been passed wittingly by the colonial legislatures. We can obtain a much more accurate estimate by studying the motives underlying British policy in this respect, as seen in the reports of the Board of Trade and of the Council Committee. Among the reasons for disallowance that stand out above all others are two: the impairment of trade and the infringement of the royal prerogative. Many of the other reasons are technical as having to do with the legal aspects of the case, and none of them to anything like the same degree represent the fundamental principles governing the relations of mother-country and colonies as do the two named above. In 1766 the Board of Trade itself summed up the leading motives controlling the disallowance, as "the Commerce and Manufactures of this country", "Your Majesty's Royal Prerogative", and "the Authority of the British Parliament". It will be noticed that trade and commerce are mentioned first. *Acts of the Privy Council, Colonial*, V. 43.

Privy Council. It gave rise to the thousand and one complicated phases of international finance, involving mercantile dealings and transactions, currency, credit, and exchange, gold, silver, copper, and paper money, bills of exchange and rates of exchange, the drift of bullion from colony to colony, and above all that question, sometimes most difficult to answer in the case of individual colonies, of the balance of trade. It touched very closely the attitude of the Board of Trade, the Privy Council, and Parliament toward bills of credit and colonial banking, a phase of our early financial history that has nowhere been studied in its entirety. As we continue to the uttermost reaches of this subtle and penetrating force, we find ourselves in the very centre of colonial life, discovering unexpected traces of its influence upon other phases of colonial activity that seem at first sight far removed from the sphere of the Navigation Acts and all their works.

Thus we see how large is the field within which the commercial policy of England operated and how deep and far-reaching were the effects of this powerful agent in shaping the development of colonial history. In the aggregate, the results of this policy, which England by virtue of her sovereign authority was endeavoring to force upon the colonies, constitute an impressive picture, the details of which are so interwoven with the general life of the colonies as to be inseparable from it. From the historian they deserve and are capable of such treatment as will furnish an orderly and logical presentation of this neglected phase of our history.

Turning now to the second part of our general subject, we shall see that colonial commerce, quite apart from its connection with England's policy, was a dominant interest of the colonists themselves. There is danger lurking in the new point of view we are taking, the danger of giving exaggerated treatment to governmental policy and neglecting those parts of the story that represent colonial activity and private enterprise. We are right in taking our stand in the mother-country and in following thence the diverging lines of governmental influence in the colonies themselves. But when once these features of our subject have been outlined there still remains another and equally important group of subjects to be studied, the actual commercial and industrial conditions in the colonies and the extent to which these conditions reacted upon the policy at home. British governmental policy on one side and colonial organization and development on the other are but the complementary parts of a common subject. Each is incomplete without the other, and neither can be fully understood unless the other has been adequately and impartially presented.

To the colonists in America a commercial and trading life was the natural accompaniment of their geographical location. The colonists did not confine their interests, as do most of our historians, to the fringe of coast from Maine to Georgia. They ranged over a larger world, the world of the North Atlantic, a great ocean-lake, bounded on the east by the coast of two continents, Europe and Africa, and on the west by the coast of a third continent, America. On the northeast, the British Isles occupied a vantage-point of great commercial and strategic importance, while within the ocean area were scores of islands, massed chiefly along the southwestern border or off the coast of Africa, from the Bahamas to Curaçao and from the Azores to the Cape Verde Islands, which held positions of the highest importance for purposes of trade and naval warfare. It is an interesting fact that the British island colonies, and still more those of France, Holland, and Denmark, have been mere names to the students of our history; and it is equally significant that no atlas of American history displays in full upon any of its maps the entire field of colonial life. The American colonists were not landsmen only, they were seafarers also. They faced wide stretches of water, over which they looked, upon which hundreds of them spent their lives, and from which came in largest part their wealth and their profits. Though migration into the interior began early, nearly half the eighteenth century had spent its course before the American colonists turned their faces in serious earnest toward the region of the west. Though the lives of thousands were spent as frontiersmen and pioneers, as many crossed the sea as penetrated the land, for colonial interstate commerce was not by land but by water. In the shaping of colonial careers and colonial governments, sea-faring and trade were only second in importance to the physical conditions of the land upon which the colonists dwelt. No one can write of the history of Portsmouth, Salem, Boston, Newport, New Haven, New York, Philadelphia, or Charleston, or of the tidewater regions of Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, without realizing the conspicuous part that commerce played in the lives of those communities and regions. Even within the narrower confines of their own bays and rivers, the colonists of continental America, particularly of the northern part, spent much of their time upon the water. They travelled but rarely by land, unless compelled to do so; they engaged in coastwise trade that carried them from Newfoundland to South Carolina; they built, in all the colonies, but more particularly in New England, hundreds of small craft, which penetrated every harbor, bay, estuary, and navigable river along a coast remarkable for the natural advantages it offered for transit, trans-

port, and traffic by water; and they devoted no small part of their time and energies as governors, councillors, and assemblymen to the furthering of a business which directly or indirectly concerned every individual, and which became more exigent and effective as the numbers of the colonists increased and their economic resources expanded.

In elaborating this phase of our subject we are called upon to deal with certain aspects which, though inseparable from the larger theme, are more strictly colonial in their characteristics and connections. I refer to staple products, shipping, trade routes, and markets, and in close connection with these are the various aspects of commercial legislation in the colonies themselves. A study of staple products demands that we survey the entire agricultural and industrial history of the colonies from Hudson Bay to Surinam, and enter upon a discriminating analysis of the economic importance of their chief products from furs to sugar and from fish to lime-juice. A study of shipping for the purpose in hand demands that we find out where ships were built, what was their tonnage, and how they were manned, and acquire some knowledge of the fitness of certain types of vessels for ocean, island, and coastwise service, according to their size and rig. The study of trade routes, one of the most varied and tangled of problems, demands that we determine the customary routes with all their variations, examine the reasons why these routes came into being, analyze the conditions attending traffic by these routes, and follow each route from port to port, as far as descriptions, logs, and registers will allow, instead of being content to see the captains and masters sail out into the unknown and return from the unknown, with very indefinite ideas as to where they had been and what they had done there. A study of markets requires that we have some fairly exact knowledge of the staple demands of other countries and colonies than our own, of the conditions under which our colonial staples were distributed, and of the nature of the commodities that other countries could offer to the captains and supercargoes wherewith to lade their vessels, either for the return trip, for the next stage of a long voyage that might cover many countries, or for the kind of huckstering business that many masters engaged in, going from port to port as they saw opportunities for profit.

Having presented these general features of this phase of our subject, I should like to state somewhat more exactly what I have in mind, and to discuss at somewhat greater length topics which, though commonly classed as economic, are in no way the peculiar property of the student of so-called economic history. First of all as to staple

products. In the far north, from Hudson Bay to Nova Scotia, Maine, and New Hampshire, furs, fish, and lumber predominated. These same staples were also of importance to central and southern New England, in addition to whale-fins and whale-oil, but the main products here were agricultural, including live-stock, naval stores, and also a great variety of provisions, many in their natural state and others dried, salted, and pickled, with some articles of wooden ware, among which were jocularly classed the wooden clocks and nutmegs of Connecticut. New England differed from her neighbor colonies to the immediate southward, not so much in the character of the staples exported as in the possession of large numbers of shipping ports through which she sent her surplus products to the world outside. New York, including within its area of supply Long Island, Westchester County, and the Hudson and Mohawk river valleys, exported a similar variety of domestic staples, with a greater amount of bread-stuffs and peltry, but lagged behind such towns as Salem, Boston, Newport, and Philadelphia in the extent of her export business. Though sharing with Albany and Perth Amboy the trade of the region, she surpassed all the others as an entrepôt for re-exported commodities from the tropical colonies. Philadelphia was wholly absorbed in commerce, and early became the main port, with Burlington and Salem as subsidiary, through which the farmers of Pennsylvania and West New Jersey and the tobacco raisers of Delaware sent their supplies. She specialized in wheat, beef, pork, and lumber, and during colonial times was the greatest mercantile city of the colonial world. She raised almost no staple suitable for export to England and did but a small re-exporting business. As she drew practically all manufactured commodities from England, the balance of trade in that direction was heavily against her. Thus we have in one group what are commonly known as the "bread colonies", possessed of diversified staples, similar in many cases to those that England produced for herself.

South of Mason and Dixon's line we enter the group of single staple colonies, in which the export was confined to a single commodity or to a small number of commodities. Maryland and Virginia raised very little except tobacco until after the middle of the eighteenth century, when the export of grain, largely to the West Indies, marked the beginnings of trade with the tropical colonies and laid the foundations of the prosperity of Baltimore and Norfolk. North Carolina in the seventeenth century was relatively unimportant as an exporting colony, supplying only tobacco to New England traders who shipped it to England; but afterward, particularly in the southern section, from the plantations along the Cape Fear

River, she developed a variety of staples, live-stock, naval stores, and provisions, and entered upon a considerable exporting activity. South Carolina was a long time in finding her staple industry, but the enumeration of rice in 1704 shows that out of the diversified commerce of the earlier era had come the one product that was to be the chief source of her wealth. In the eighteenth century rice, indigo, naval stores, furs, cypress, and cedar made up the bulk of her cargoes. Among the island colonies, Bermuda and the Bahamas, having no sugar and little tobacco, played but little part in the commercial life of the colonies. But with the West Indies—Jamaica, Barbadoes, and the Leeward Islands—we are face to face with that group known as the "sugar colonies" which formed till 1760 the leading factor in England's commercial scheme. Conspicuous among colonial staples were the products of these islands, sugar, molasses, and rum, with a small amount of indigo, cotton, ginger, allspice, and woods for cabinet work and dyeing purposes, some of which came from the mainland of Honduras. The contrast of the "bread colonies" and the "sugar colonies" forms one of the leading features of colonial history, and in their respective careers we have the operation of forces that explain many things in the course of colonial development.

With shipping we deal first of all with the actual extent of the ship-building industry, regarding which at present we have no very exact statistical information. Weeden has given us for New England an admirable, though rather miscellaneous, collection of facts that stand badly in need of organization. All the leading towns of the North had dock-yards and built ships, and many of the smaller towns on sea-coast and navigable rivers laid the keels of lesser craft. So rapidly did the business increase that New England after 1700 was not only doing a large carrying trade on her own account, but was selling vessels in all parts of the Atlantic world—in the southern colonies and in the West Indies, Spain, Portugal, and England. The golden age of New England ship-building was during the first third of the eighteenth century, and so rapid was the growth of the business that in 1724 English shipwrights of the port of London would have had a law passed forbidding the New Englanders to build ships or compelling them to sell their ships after their arrival in England. But here the colonists scored, for, as the counsellor of the Board of Trade said, the English ship-builders had no remedy, since by the Acts of Navigation the shipping of the plantations was in all respects to be considered as English-built. Later the business fell off, the centre of the ship-building activity moved north to north-eastern Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and the English builders

ceased to be concerned. New York, too, had her ship-yards, as had northern New Jersey, that of Rip Van Dam occupying the water front on the North River in the rear of Trinity churchyard; and Philadelphia, the chief ship-building city in America, in the years between 1727 and 1766, built nearly half the entire number that were entered in the ship-registry of the port during those years. In the South ship-building was less of a negligible factor than has commonly been assumed. Maryland in 1700 had 161 ships, sloops, and shallops, built or building along the Chesapeake, and some of these were large enough to engage in the English trade. Virginia built chiefly, but not entirely, for river and bay traffic, and North Carolina, though hampered by the want of good ports and harbors, made ship-building one of the established industries of the colony. South Carolina carried on her great trade with Europe chiefly in British bottoms and during the eighteenth century had scarcely a dozen ships at any one time that belonged to the province. Among the island colonies only Bermuda and the Bahamas played any part as ship-builders; while the others, early denuded of available timber, remained entirely dependent on outside carriers.

In size, the New England built vessels were mainly under 100 tons, with a large proportion of vessels of less than 20 tons, in which, however, ocean voyages were sometimes made. Occasionally vessels were built of 250 and 300 tons, and a few, monster ships for those days, reached 700 and 800 tons. Gabriel Thomas tells us that ships of 200 tons were built in Philadelphia, but the largest ship entered in the register mentioned above was of 150 tons, with others ranging all the way down to 4 tons. The Maryland lists mention vessels of 300 and 400 tons built in that colony, but the number could not have been large. In 1767 a vessel of 256 tons was offered for sale before launching in Virginia.

Five varieties of vessels were in use: (1) ships and pinks, three-masters with square rig; (2) snows and barks, also three-masters, but with one mast rigged fore-and-aft; (3) ketches, brigs, and brigantines, with two masts but of different sizes, combining square rig with fore-and-aft, and schooners, a native American product, with fore-and-aft rig on both masts, though in its development the schooner often carried more masts than two, without change in the cut of the sails; (4) sloops, shallops, and smacks, single-masters carrying fore-and-aft sails; and (5) boats without masts—hog-boats, fly-boats, wherries, row-boats, and canoes. Bermuda boats were conspicuous among colonial vessels, because rigged with mutton-leg sails. No statement regarding relative numbers can be made until far more information has been gathered than exists at present, but



the proportion of three-masters, two-masters, and single-masters was somewhat in the ratio of one, two, and three. Of the numbers of seamen we know as yet very little.

Turning now to the complicated question of routes, which criss-crossed so bewilderingly the waters of the Atlantic, we can, I think, group the courses without difficulty, if we keep in mind the nature of supply and demand and the requirements of the Navigation Acts.

The first determining factor was the requirement that all the enumerated commodities—tobacco, sugar, cotton, indigo, ginger, fustic and other dye woods, and later cocoa, molasses, rice, naval stores, copper, beaver and other skins—be carried directly to England, or from one British plantation to another for the supply of local wants, whence, if re-exported, they were to go to England. This requirement gives us our first set of trade routes. The chief staples of all the colonies from Maryland to Barbadoes were carried to England in fleets of vessels provided by English merchants that during the days of convoys went out in the early winter, about Christmas time, and returned to England in the spring. The providing of naval protection in times of war was a matter of constant concern to the Admiralty, while the gathering of vessels and the arranging of seasons was one of concern to the merchants. After 1713 when convoying became largely unnecessary except to the West Indies, individual ships sailed at varying times, frequently returning from Maryland or Virginia as late as the end of August. We may call this route back and forth across the ocean between England and her southern and West Indian colonies the great thoroughfare of our colonial commerce. It was regular, dignified, and substantial. Out of it grew two subsidiary routes, one from New York and New England with re-exported commodities to England, and one from South Carolina and Georgia to southern Europe under the privilege allowed after 1730 and 1735 of exporting rice directly to all points south of Cape Finisterre. Thus we have a series of direct routes from nearly all of the American colonies converging upon England and one route from South Carolina and Georgia diverging to any point south of France, but generally confined to the Iberian Peninsula and the Straits. Along these routes were carried a definite series of commodities, raised, with the exception of naval stores and beaver, entirely in colonies south of Pennsylvania. To this commercial activity must be added the traffic in these same commodities among the colonists themselves, a service chiefly in the hands of the northerners, who carried tobacco, rice, logwood, and sugar from the southern and West Indian colonies to their own ports and there either consumed them, re-exported them to England,

or in the case of sugar and molasses worked them over into rum and shipped the latter where they pleased.

When we consider the export activities of the northern colonies, we find ourselves involved in a more varied and complicated series of voyages. First, all the colonies north of Maryland, except Pennsylvania, had a certain but not very extensive trade directly with England. They carried in greater or less quantities an assortment of furs, fish, rawhides, lumber, whale-fins and whale-oil, naval stores, wheat, wheat flour, hops, and a little iron, though the largest amount of exported iron came from Maryland and Virginia. They also re-exported tobacco, sugar, molasses, rum, cocoa, hard woods, and dye woods. All these they carried in their own ships as a rule, and because their own products were not sufficient to balance what they wished to buy, they frequently sold their ships also to English merchants. Salem, Newport, and New York were the chief centres of the English trade. Secondly, the northern colonies carried on a very large trade in non-enumerated commodities with the countries of Europe. To various ports, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, they sent quantities of "merchantable" fish, lumber, flour, train oil, and rice and naval stores before they were enumerated, chiefly to Spain, Portugal, southern French ports, and Leghorn, the mart of the Mediterranean. A few ships appear to have crept through the Sound into the Baltic; others, very rarely, went up the Adriatic to Venice; and in the case of a few enterprising merchants, notably John Ross of Philadelphia, vessels were sent to India and the East, though in 1715 New England reported no trade there, only a few privateers having occasionally "strol'd that way and [taken] some rich prizes".

The bulk of the northern trade, however, was not with Europe but with the West Indies and with the other continental colonies. The ramifications of this branch of colonial commerce were almost endless, the routes followed were most diverse, and the commodities exported included almost every staple, native or foreign, that was current in the colonial world. Philadelphia and New York traded chiefly with the West Indies and concerned themselves less than did New England with the coastwise traffic; but the New Englanders, in their hundreds of vessels of small tonnage, went to Newfoundland and Annapolis Royal with provisions, salt, and rum, to New York, the Jerseys, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Bermuda, and the Caribbee Islands, peddling every known commodity that they could lay their hands on—meats, vegetables, fruits, flour, Indian meal, refuse fish, oil, candles, soap, butter, cider, beer, cranberries, horses, sheep, cows, and oxen, pipe-

staves, deal boards, hoops, and shingles, earthenware and woodenware, and other similar commodities of their own; and tobacco, sugar, rum, and molasses, salt, naval stores, wines, and various manufactured goods which they imported from England. They went to Monte Cristi, Cape François, Surinam, and Curaçao, to the islands off the coast of Africa, commonly known as the Wine Islands, and there they trafficked and bargained as only the New Englander knew how to traffic and bargain. It was a peddling and huckstering business, involving an enormous amount of petty detail, frequent exchanges, and a constant lading and unlading as the captains and masters moved from port to port. Sometimes great rafts of lumber were floated down from Maine, New Hampshire, and the Delaware, and not infrequently New England ships went directly to Honduras for logwood and to Tortuga and Turks Island for salt.

Let us consider the return routes. With the southern and West Indian colonies the problem was a simple one. The merchant ships from England went as a rule directly to the colonies, generally laden with English and Continental manufactured goods that according to the act of 1663 could be obtained by the colonists only through England. They followed usually the same route coming and going, though occasionally a ship-captain would go from England to Guinea where he would take on a few negroes for the colonies. Maryland seems to have obtained nearly all her negroes in that way.

But with the northern colonies, where the vessel started in the first instance from the colony, the routes were rarely the same. A vessel might go to England, huckstering from port to port until the cargo was disposed of, and then return to America with manufactured goods. It might go to England with lumber, flour, furs, and naval stores, then back to Newfoundland for fish, then to Lisbon or the Straits, then to England with Continental articles, and thence back to the starting point. It might go directly to Spain, Portugal, or Italy, trying one port after another, Cadiz, Bilbao, Alicante, Carthagena, Marseilles, Toulon, Leghorn, and Genoa, thence to England, and thence to America. It might go directly to the Wine Islands and return by the same route with the wines of Madeira and Fayal and the Canaries, though it was a debatable question whether Canary wines were not to be classed with Continental commodities and so to be carried to America by way of England only. It might go to Spain or Portugal, thence to the Wine Islands, thence to Senegambia or Goree or the Guinea coast for beeswax, gums, and ivory, thence back to Lisbon and home by way of England; or, if it were a slave ship, it might go to the Guinea coast, thence to Barbadoes, and home, or as was probably common, to

Barbadoes first, thence to Africa, thence back to the West Indies and home, with a mixed cargo of negroes, sugar, and cash. Frequently the captain sold his cargo and even his ship for cash, and if he did this in Europe, or in England to London or Bristol merchants, he would either return with the money or invest it in manufactured goods, which he would ship on some homeward-bound vessel, returning himself with his invoice. With the New Englander, and to a somewhat lesser degree with the New Yorker and Philadelphian, the variations were as great as were the opportunities for traffic.

In this brief statement, I have given but a bare outline of a difficult and unworked problem in colonial history. Did time allow I should like to consider certain supplemental phases of the general subject that are deserving of careful attention. These are, first, the methods of distributing colonial commodities in England and Wales and of sending them into the interior, into Scotland, and into Ireland; secondly, the character and extent of the plantation trade with Ireland and Scotland directly, a matter of some interest and a good deal of difficulty; and thirdly, the re-exportation of tobacco, sugar, and other tropical and semi-tropical products from England to the European Continent. But upon these subjects I can say nothing here. One topic must, however, be briefly discussed, the question of illicit trade and smuggling.

The nature of the smuggling that went on during our colonial period is very simple, though the extent of it and the relation of it to the total volume of colonial trade is very difficult to determine. It is doubtful if satisfactory conclusions can ever be reached on these points, owing both to the lack of evidence and to its unsatisfactory character. For the most part smuggling took three forms: first, direct trade in enumerated commodities between the colonies and European countries, and participated in by English, Irish, American, and West Indian ships, trafficking to Holland, Hamburg, Spain, Portugal, Marseilles, Toulon, and other Mediterranean ports; secondly, a direct return trade to America or the West Indies, without touching at England as the law required, and participated in by the same ships, carrying the dry goods, wines, and brandies of Europe. The latter traffic had many aspects, for it included the trade between American British colonies and American foreign colonies, in which enumerated commodities, or in many cases non-enumerated commodities, were exchanged for European goods, purchasable at St. Eustatius, St. Thomas, or Curaçao, or at Monte Cristi in Hispaniola. There can be little doubt that this trade attained considerable proportions and was one of the channels whereby brandies, cocoa, silks, linens, and the like came into the colonies. There was

much smuggled liquor drunk in the West Indies, and many were the damask gowns and silk stockings worn; and I fear that there were many things enjoyed in Newport, Boston, and Philadelphia that came either directly from France or by way of the foreign West Indies. Indeed, it seems to have been a common practice for ships of nearly every continental colony to go to Curaçao and return with European dry goods and cocoa.

Thirdly, there was a trade of the northern colonies with the foreign West Indies, in which a vessel would carry a general cargo to Jamaica or Barbadoes, sell all or a part of it for cash—gold or light silver—pass on to the French colonies of Guadeloupe, Martinique, or Santo Domingo, or to the Dutch colony of St. Eustatius, and there buy, more cheaply than at Jamaica, Barbadoes, or the Leeward Islands, their return cargo of sugar and molasses. There was nothing strictly illegal about this traffic, unless the northern trader laid out a part of his cash in European dry goods and smuggled them into the colonies by one or other of the many contrivances so well known to all West Indian traders; but it was injurious to the British sugar colonies in depriving them of a part of their market and draining them of much of their cash. It became illegal, however, when, after the passage of the Molasses Act, expressly designed to prevent this traffic, the Northerner evaded the duties imposed by this act on foreign sugar and molasses. Then if he brought in foreign sugar and molasses without paying the duty and on the same voyage stowed away hidden bales of Holland linens and French silks, casks of French brandies, and pipes of claret, he committed a double breach of the law. Lastly, if we were to go into the problem of illicit trade in all its phases, we should have to consider a certain amount of petty smuggling off Newfoundland, in Ireland, and at the Isle of Man, and by way of the Channel Islands; but upon these points our knowledge is at present very meagre.

A useful addition to this paper would be a statement regarding our sources of information, in manuscript in England and America, and in print in a great number of accessible works. There is an immense amount of available material in the form of correspondence, accounts, registers, lists, reports, returns, log-books, port books, statements of claims, letter-books, and the like, which, though often difficult to use, are all workable and illuminating to the student who has organized his plan of treatment in a logical and not a haphazard fashion. The subject is a fascinating one, and the more one studies it, the more important and suggestive it becomes. I cannot believe that the future will show such a disregard of its significance as the past has done, for when its place is once recognized and its in-

fluence determined, colonial history will become not only fuller and richer, but also more picturesque, and the life of the colonists will appear as broader and more varied. And just as the local field will be enlarged and extended, so will the place of the colonies in the British and European systems of commercial empire be given its proper setting, and the balance between things imperial and things colonial will be restored. Only when such balance has been sought for and attained will the way be prepared for a history of the colonial period that is comprehensive in scope, scientific in conception, and thoroughly scholarly in its mode of treatment.

CHARLES M. ANDREWS.